THE NEWS LETTER

OF THE COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

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THE PLACE OF ENGLISH IN THE REVISED COLGATE CURRICULUM

After careful study of the role of English in undergraduate learning the faculty of Colgate University has decided upon certain experimental changes. These are part of more pervasive curricular revisions taking effect in September, 1946.

The main elements of the total plan are the core curriculum, preceptorial instruction, the general examinations and the concentration program. The core curriculum, distributed over the four years, consists of seven required full-year courses: Natural Science, Public Affairs, Philosophy and Religion, Fine Arts and Literature, Foreign Areas, English Communication, and a senior integration course tentatively called The Liberal Tradition. Preceptorial instruction, extending over the freshman and sophomore years, offers each student individual guidance in his intellectual and personal development. The sophomore general examination, intended as a measure of the student's advance in general education and a stimulus to his initiative, will be given towards the end of the second year. Ultimately there will be a similar senior general examination, not to be confused with the concentration examination in the student's special field of study.

The first three of these educational instruments—core curriculum, preceptorial instruction, and general examinations — represent an enlarged assumption by the University as a whole of responsibility for the student's general education: all three are to be administered by the University, not by departments. Against this background the changes in English requirements can be seen in perspective. They may be summarized briefly as follows:

1. Beginning in September, 1946, there will be no generally required freshman course in writing and speaking. Entrance tests will be made of reading comprehension, vocabulary, and writing ability.

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CHANGE OF VENUE

The Editor has resigned from the University of Maryland, and will move to Lehigh University about June 25. All communications to the NEWS LETTER or the Appointment Bureau or the Executive Secretary should be sent after June 20 to Lehigh University, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

A MOO . . . T POINT

Two cows are grazing on a hill
one chews her cud, and one stands still
one eats green grass and also hay
the other thinks and moos all day.

One of the cows has common sense
well-being is her recompense
her loins are fat, her udders full
though, to be sure, she's rather dull.

I much prefer the thinner cow
she has an intellectual brow
her gaze is calm and deeply wise
philosophizing, I surmise.

The farmer thinks, though, it won't do
for any cow to think and moo
to moo and think and stay so scrawny
he wants a herd that's fat and brawny.

I'm very fearful that by now
he's butchered the poor, useless cow.
How sad a world, I speculate
where such must be the thinker's fate!

If I am like the scrawny scholar
Why rest TWO chins above my collar?

Donald Hutchins MacMahon,
State College of Washington.

NEW NAME PROPOSED

As previously reported, the title NEWS LETTER bars our publication from the most favorable postage rates. It is proposed at a convenient future time to change the title to THE CEA CRITIC. Comment invited.

THE STATE UNIVERSITY'S HIGH ROLE

The higher our conception of human nature, the higher will be our conception of education. The lower our conception of human nature, the lower our conception of education.

The high role of the state university, as an instrument of American democracy, is to bring the humanities to the common man. Its most distinctive duty is to enable the common man to enter into his cultural heritage, to develop his own humanity by means of it, to learn to face life with a sense of relative values, to prepare for his part in dealing wisely with the desperate problems of the next half century. Under existing conditions no other agency can do this, not the press, not the radio, not the motion picture. To do it for a significant portion of the people is the great function of undergraduate education at the people's university.

(Continued on page 4)

THE COLLEGE ENGLISH CURRICULUM

The following introductory statement to the Committee's Report was omitted inadvertently from the NEWS LETTER:

The committee especially desires comment at one point, where it was not unanimous: section II, opening paragraph, last sentence. "Properly taught, it (the Freshman - Sophomore Course recommended by the Report) should serve as well the needs of students in Commerce, Engineering, etc., since they are to be persons and citizens as well as technical specialists."

In correspondence and in discussion at regional meetings, members have raised the following questions about the Committee's Report. Does it not fail to emphasize sufficiently the need for training in the mechanics of writing? Is a two-year required program desirable? Is it true that freshmen and sophomores write in vacuo? Will the great books

(Continued on page 4)

NEITHER FISH, NOR FLESH, NOR GOOD RED HERRING

("Neither Fish, Nor Flesh, Nor Good Red Herring" was Mr. Canby's luncheon address at the New York meeting.)

That is what educators seem to be saying about literature in English in the university curriculum. They admit that good writing in English should be taught, although they have vague, conflicting, and sometimes weird ideas as to how to do it. One reason being that some mean correct writing, and some good writing, which are by no means necessarily the same thing. But there are almost as many ideas as to what the teaching of English or American literature should consist of as there are leading educators in the humanities. A quarter of a century ago, in a well-staffed college or university, there would be a half dozen teachers of English, each teaching his subject with a different purpose in view. For one, it was social history. For another, it was the interpretation of character as seen through the imagination. For a third, it was textual criticism. For a fourth, it was the art of esthetics illuminated by a study of technique. It can be doubted whether all this made much difference, provided the teacher was good enough, and had enthusiasm as well as knowledge at his command. There are many doors to a cathedral, and which way you enter is not important, provided it is a cathedral and not just a warehouse of print.

But it is certainly true that this lack of a unified objective does make a difference—a vast difference—now. The Roman who had substituted, by the fifth century, exercise at the baths for the science of arms, was helpless when the barbarians overran his pleasant villas and luxurious cities. Now the humanities are in the same unhappy position, though we shall not be so uncomplimentary (or foolish) as to call science and technology barbarous. Yet these humanities, which carry in an essence distilled by the imagination

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THE NEWS LETTER

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EDITORIAL

The College English Association is healthy and growing. More new members have joined in 1946 than in any year since the Association was founded. The Appointment Bureau is active; and the more it is used, the more useful it will be. Why should it not become the national clearing house for appointments to English Departments? The NEWS LETTER now appears regularly in six pages, and copy is not wanting for more.

Three regional groups of CEA have become active during 1946, and more are expected to develop in the next year. The programs at the meetings of these Sections have been of general interest, and they have stimulated brisk discussion. The opportunity for teachers to meet one another and talk informally has been welcomed.

At these meetings and through the columns of the NEWS LETTER, the Association continues to make clear what it stands for. It emphasizes a present need for selecting good people to be English teachers; it advocates training them to teach English well, and it advocates paying them well. The Association urges active and friendly cooperation between college and high school teachers of English in planning and implementing well-integrated programs. The Association feels that instruction in good writing must be made, as far as is practicable, a joint responsibility of the English staff and the rest of the faculty.

The Association recognizes the urgency of planning and making effective in college the sort of courses in literature which interest students and which command general respect. It is not happy at the present estate of English Departments and at the present standards for selecting, training, or promoting English teachers. It feels that the whole traditional program of English Departments needs a searching and critical examination. It believes in liberal education, not mere training and not indoctrination; and it holds that knowledge and intelligent appreciation of our literature is essential to an understanding of our cultural heritage, to a liberal education in whatever terms it may be defined.

The Association welcomes to membership all college teachers of English who are interested in the problems of their profession, and it urges them to strengthen the program of making the humanities, and literature in particular, the central and vital experience they should be in the American college.

ADDITION AND CORRECTION

The typographical vagaries of the April NEWS LETTER are regretted by the printer. Noted too late for the correction slip was the omission of the author's name from **Apology For My Profession.** Credit where credit is due, Professor August H. Mason, Univ. of Alabama!

LIMITATIONS OF TECHNOCRACY

A city apartment's
No place for a cat;
I couldn't imprison
A kitten like that,
Though I love its soft purr
And I love to say "SCAT!"

My refrigerator
Purrs like a cat,
The motor's low whirr
Sounds exactly like that;
I love its soft purr,
But I cannot say "SCAT!"

Cecilia H. Hendricks,
Indiana University.

GLEANED FROM THE MAIL

Dear Editor:

Congratulations on the able fashion in which you are carrying on the affairs of CEA. Confidentially, I think your predecessor ought to have stepped down long ago, in your favor! Will you be so kind as to ask my English teaching colleagues whether any of them have come across in their learned researches anything of interest on the subject of profanity, ancient or modern? Someone must have written a thesis on the subject of Oaths and their Ancestry, or on the Deterioration of Cuss-Words. Surely these or kindred subjects have not escaped the thesis-hounds. I am deep in preparations for a book on the subject, and am astonished at the paucity of good background material. In other words, I have found damned little.

Yours in CEA,
Burges Johnson.

May 7, 1946.

Dear Editor:

When the CEA began there was in the minds of its founders a definite desire to bring into association with the teachers of English as many as possible of those men and women who make worthy contributions to contemporary literature. A surprising number of them are teachers or have taught college English: Thornton Wilder, Hervey Allen, John Erskine, Mary Ellen Chase are typical names. Our consitution provides for such membership, but those who drew up that document had in mind that such prospective members should be approached by invitation and that this invitation should be our tribute to the quality of their work, suggesting that they actually share with us in the effort to create a finer sense of literary discrimination among college students. Several such writers have been interested in CEA from the start and I trust that they retain their membership. It might prove desirable now to extend honorary membership to a few more, the names to be carefully chosen by a suitable committee.

For some time past I have meant to extend an invitation to any English teaching colleagues who live outside New York and are also members of CEA, to visit

APPOINTMENT BUREAU

A recent mailing of notices of the Appointment Bureau to about six hundred colleges has brought a heavy response, and the Executive Secretary has been able to recommend candidates for most positions. Instructors continue in great demand but poor supply, but inquiries are increasing for upper bracket candidates. Candidates with training in speech and dramatics who register promptly can be referred to desirable vacancies at once.

Correspondence indicates that members are not familiar with the mechanics of the Bureau. First, it is open to members only, but new members are welcome. Second, the Bureau attempts only to put interested parties in touch with one another. Third, a member, to register, should send the registration fee of $3.00 to the Executive Secretary; upon receipt of this fee, the member will be sent a set of blanks to fill out. When he returns the blanks, he will be suggested to any head of department or dean who inquires for a candidate with his qualifications. Unless the inquiring officer specifically requests it, the registrant will not be notified to apply direct. Membership dues and the registration fee may be sent in at the same time.

The desirability of being registered at this time is strongly urged for those who wish positions, or who wish to improve their positions.

The Players, at 16 Gramercy Park, when next they visit the metropolis. If they have leisure to inspect the dramatic treasures in that pleasant club-house, they will find a library devoted chiefly to books relating to the dramatic arts, and having unique value; also a collection of famous dramatic costumes; and many portraits of interest to students of the drama. It would be necessary for any member interested in accepting my invitation to write to me for a guest-card.

Burges Johnson.

The Executive Secretary will welcome suggestions of writers to whom invitations to membership should be extended. They will be sumbitted to a committee appointed by President Van Doren.

REGIONAL MEETINGS

New York, April 13

The program of the New York meeting appeared in the March NEWS LETTER. Mr. Canby's address, which he used also as an editorial in "The Saturday Review of Literature," appears in this issue. It is hoped that President Van Doren's remarks will appear in the August number. The discussion of the Committee's report was transcribed, and is now being considered by the committee. Questions raised have been summarized elsewhere in this issue. Secretary-Emeritus Burges Johnson, just back from Texas, presided at the luncheon, and at the animated general discussion which continued until late in the afternoon. The following officers of the New York Section were elected: President, Strang Lawson, Colgate University, and Secretary-Treasurer, Donald L. Clark, Columbia Univ.

Richmond, Va., April 20

At the morning session of the meeting of the Virginia-West Virginia-North Carolina Section, Mr. Dabney S. Lancaster, Superintendent of Public Instruction for Virginia, and members of his staff, presented "The English Curriculum in the High School and Suggestions for a Closer Integration with the College Program." In discussion, the schools were urged to diversify their training to meet the needs of students of varying abilities. The need was stressed for English teachers trained to teach English, and the following resolution was passed, "That this division of the College English Association go on record as suggesting to the Virginia State Board of Education that it consider raising the number of required hours (six) of college English for teachers of English in the public schools of Virginia."

At lunch, Professor Lewis Leary, Duke University, recently of the OSS, spoke on "Academia Revisited." Professor Leary has promised to publish his remarks in an early number of the NEWS LETTER. In the afternoon, the Executive Secretary pinch hit for Professor Jess H. Jackson, William and Mary, who was struck silent with laryngitis. Professor Jackson had been scheduled to lead discussion of **The College English Curriculum** and of the point of view in Professor Foerster's **The Humanities and the Common Man.** The following officers of the Section were elected: President, Lewis Leary, Duke Univ.; Vice President, Dean Grace Landrum, William and Mary; Secretary-Treasurer, Mary Dee Long, Sweet Briar.

Baltimore, May 4

The Middle Atlantic Section enjoyed the hospitality of Johns Hopkins University and the cordial good offices as presiding officer of Professor Kemp Malone. A paper on "Training The English Teacher," by Professor John Makosky, Western Maryland College, will appear in an early issue of the NEWS LETTER, and Mr. David Daiches has promised that if he can snatch time from his duties at the British Embassy, he will reduce his brilliant address to typescript and send it to the Editor. Mr. Daiches spoke on "The Place of the English Department." Discussion of **The College English Curriculum** was led by the Executive Secretary. The following officers of the Section were elected: President, Francis E. Litz, Catholic University; Vice President, N. B. Allen, Univ. of Delaware; Secretary - Treasurer, Thomas F. Marshall, Western Maryland college.

I'VE BEEN READING

Members are invited to contribute to "I've Been Reading." Comments on any book that they feel will interest other English teachers will be welcome. Members who wish to review new books should address the Assistant Editor.

PURSUIT OF UNDERSTANDING: Autobiography of an Education, by Esther Cloudman Dunn (The Macmillan Company, New York, 1945; 229 pages).

Esther Cloudman Dunn concludes that what one studies is by no means the whole story. The student, the material on which the teacher works, is not constant like clay or marble. He may grow through many stages in four years of college.

One of the interesting comparisons in the book is that between the predominant discipline in high school teaching, with its student-centered interest and relationship to the community, and college teaching, where the emphasis is frequently upon the professor's further research. Another is that between the English college, where a few are educated and those few know what they want of college when they enter, and the United States, where many do not know what they want of college, but where the process of raising the intellectual level will proceed more rapidly than it does in Europe because a larger number in every generation are exposed to a college education.

America, she believes, because it started too religious in New England or too physically active for reflection in the pioneering areas, has never taken learning in its stride. Only from parsons and professors has a light sprinkling fallen upon children during their least receptive, most turbulently self-centered years. We still lack a clear sense of intellectual interest as a part of life.

Anyone who has ever studied in an English university will find especially interesting her chapters on England, where she received her Ph.D. from the University of London in 1922, the first person to take the degree there in English literature.

Miss Dunn is now Mary Augusta Jordan, professor of English in Smith College. J. G. E.

LITERARY STUDY AND THE SCHOLARLY PROFESSION, by Hardin Craig (University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1944; 150 pages).

Dr. Craig's ten lectures given at the University of Washington are a good stimulant to teachers to work harder at their tasks. He distinguishes the humanities from science by showing that they deal with the realm of probability, but he insists that they require a definite discipline.

The element of personal experience is prominent in these essays. The last, entitled "Colleges and Universities in a Post-War World," is filled with good advice drawn from experience in various uninversities. Discounting methodology, Dr. Craig advocates more attention to research, less specialization, and higher standards of scholarship.

He does not think that the Ph.D. should be given for creative writing. Following William James, he divides thinkers into two groups. Those whose emotional sensibilities arrest the process of association and whose aesthetic nature demands expression of the concrete images are the artists. Those who notice the bond of identity between the thoughts evoked by the association are the scholars and the scientists. He thinks that the only justification for research is the advancement of truth.

Illustrative ideas are drawn from Dr. Craig's favories—Bacon, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Plato, Carlyle, Swift, Poe. The function of literature he believes is to enable students to build up their world and to meet the tragedy of existence with courage. The sinbook appeals most.
cere voice of the man behind the

J. G.E.

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UNIVERSITY'S HIGH ROLE

(Continued from page 1)

What we commonly have today, however, is a low view of human nature and of education. While professing ideal purposes, those who control our state universities have generally followed a working program based on the assumption that man is essentially a materialist desiring bread and circuses . . . The average student, it is implied, has little or nothing of importance to gain from such things as armchair philosophy, polite literature, and the dead past. "Culture," in this view, is not for the common man; he does not want it and cannot be made to want it. He is right in being practical, in going after direct utility. He should be trained for a job—everything else is incidental.

But this, I am going to suggest, is to conceive of him as a slave. The utilitarian specialists who control most of our state universities are not content that the common man should be a worker: he should be nothing else, he should be kept a mere worker. They will not recognize and develop his humanity. They refuse to provide a way to make him free. They want to draw the young man or woman into a vocation as early as possible, "adjust" him more and more firmly in an occupational groove, make of him a slave to society ("one for All") . . . This cynical view is justified to the student himself by an appeal, equally cynical, to his self-interest. He is invited to regard the university as a vocational school for getting him on in the world ("all for One"). To be sure, the utilitarian specialists do not always say these things so frankly. In university catalogues they actually speak of "the well-rounded development of the individual," and everywhere they proclaim their views, disarmingly, in the name of democracy.

In belying man's freedom they are not justified by the facts of science—of biology and psychology. Whenever the facts seem to reduce man to a low plane, they have been colored by an admixture of philosophy, and philosophy, of course, is not science. We are as free as ever to believe in the nobility of man, and must believe in it if we are to keep civilization a going concern. There is no occasion for any new or old myth. We need not, in the manner of the demagogue, flatter the common man as an angel complete—if he were, there would be small occasion for religion and education. We need only believe that there is a noble element in every man because he is a man, however overlaid and obscured by laziness, by all other vices, by the effect of a bad environment. Men at their worst sink even beneath animality, and yet remain men, moral creatures, potentially superior to lower forms of life. Only moral beings can be immoral.

The very word **humanities** (the plural of **humanity**) should remind us that they concern all humankind, are not exclusive, not for any class, not for an artificial aristocracy of birth or wealth, not for a natural aristocracy of intelligence, but for all men and women. They concern all of us, concern us more deeply than anything else, concern our very humanity. Humanity—this is the very common thing which the comman man possesses as truly as the uncommon man. Because of it every man (as Jefferson conceived, as Henry Wallace conceives) has uncommon potentialities. Humanity is the most important thing about the common man, and about his education. . . .

All men desire the good life, however inadequate or perverted their notions of goodness. Because of their inherent capacity for nobility, they can be attracted to what is excellent. A main function of education is to direct their desire for excellence toward objects that are really excellent. There is excellence in our own modern world, despite its mass production of suffering, and this excellence should be communicated. There was excellence of other kinds in the religious and humanistic ages of the past, and this too should be communicated. The best things thought and made and done in the past were not just a mark of aristocracy; they were given to the world, and are a heritage not for the few but for the many, not a means of education for a decorative class or group, not a way of escape from our own age, but the most available practical means of educating the common man in self-realization, largeness of understanding, and ability to meet contemporary needs. The concept of "best" may take us anywhere and anywhen, because it is not limited by time or space. In the view of culture, ours is one world.

Since men differ widely, it is not to be supposed that all will derive the same results from their contact with the humanities. "To each according to his talent." The humanities can be grasped on many levels, and are amply rewarding, as experience shows, even on a very low level of understanding. To say that what is great is for the few is to insult the common man, to deny the element of greatness in his nature. He has a stake in spiritual as well as material wealth. The century of the common man calls for a better distribution of material wealth; it needs, no less, a better distribution of spiritual wealth.

Norman Foerster,
Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

(Reprinted in part, by permission, from the Preface, **The Humanities and The Comman Man,** Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1946.)

COLLEGE ENGLISH

(Continued from page 1)

provide that stimulus to good writing which the Committee assumes? Is not such a course as the Committee proposes an easy course, lacking emphasis upon composition and intelligent reading and encouraging facile discussion of ideas? Should there not be more emphasis upon the importance of training in speech? Does a great books course have any marked advantage over a survey course, or even a course in contemporary literature? Is not the important quality of art its power to move, and not its ideas, and does not this power evaporate in translation?

In this last connection, two members have spoken pointedly. First, Professor Odell Shepard, talking informally at the end of the discussion in New York: "I should like to say at the end of this discussion that we have left out two things. One of them is not sufficiently stressed in the printed report of the Committee. It is the central fact that literature is an art, and that art exists for the theme of pleasure, of particular kinds. The pleasure, of course, that normal people take in the making and contemplating of beautiful things. Nothing in the printed report gives any hint of that. We have spoken of literature as though it were merely a bank from which we could delve ideals and models. It is no such matter, of course, as we are all perfectly aware."

Professor Robert M. Gay writes, "I seem to miss in the proposed **College English Curriculum** which you have published a clean-cut recognition of the reasons why we teach English at all, though no doubt these are implied . . . I should not want to seem to criticize that report adversely, for it strikes me as admirable. But, as I look back over forty-five years of teaching, I am impressed by the fact that courses and curricula, though of course necessary, really have little to do with good teaching, and that also of course is the one thing needful . . . I realize that we have to take good teaching for granted, and then plan as best we can regarding courses and curricula, and that therefore such reports as this are very useful. . . . As I see the problem of teaching literature to college undergraduates, it is primarily one of **conditioning** them to enjoy reading—not supplying them with ideas or information or even persuading them to think, but helping them to read with intelligence and pleasure. Once we accomplish that we can trust them—if not now, some day—to gather the ideas and have the thoughts. Certainly, if they leave our courses and curricula with the conviction that literature is dry and useless, we are wasting our time. I am afraid that many of them do that now."

Copies of the NEWS LETTER have been returned as improperly addressed for the following members: Jas. L. Lynch, Flagstaff, Ariz.; M. Elizabeth Clark, Trenton, N. J.; Robert Frost, South Shaftsbury, Vermont.

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SCRIBNERS

THE PLACE OF ENGLISH

(Continued from page 1)

Freshmen conspicuously deficient in the mechanics of English or in reading ability will be assigned to a non-credit course to assist them in removing their deficiency by the end of their first year. Elective freshman courses in writing, speaking and reading will also be offered.

2. The faculty as a whole has accepted responsibility for insisting on minimum standards of written and spoken English in the work of all courses.

3. In addition, one of the major tasks of preceptors, who will meet students regularly as individuals and in small groups, will be the development of good English usage, sound organization, and lucid expression. This will be done through oral and written reports on the work of core courses, and through small discussion groups.

4. It is hoped that motivation for self-development in English expression will be strengthened by the fact that the sophomore general examination will include various tests of proficiency in English: among them, careful inspection of the quality of writing done in essay-answers to problems arising from core courses. A passing grade in this general examination will be prerequisite to promotion to junior status and admission to concentration.

In the sophomore year particularly the services of preceptors will be directed towards helping the student achieve that understanding of the problems of the core courses and their inter-relationships which he will be expected to demonstrate in the sophomore general examination. Understanding and articulation should thus go hand in hand: there will be no separation of form and content; it will be imperative for the student to be able to say what he means.

5. In the sophomore year an introduction to the art of literature will constitute part of the core course in the fine arts. Although this course may for convenience be organized into one term in literature and one in the arts, the two terms will be taught as correlated parts of one course and from as unified an approach as possible. This course is not yet fully organized but the following predictions may be ventured: (a) its literary material will probably be drawn from the whole of literature, past and present, and not from English or American exclusively; (b) it will me an intensive and comparative study of a small number of complete works rather than a survey; (c) among the aims of the course will probably be to clarify the student's perception of levels of value in literature; to distinguish the nature and worth of literature from the nature and worth of the other college disciplines; and to whet the student's appetite for further reading.

Although this core course, like others, will probably be taught cooperatively by members of various departments, it may reasonably be assumed that a large part of the burden will fall on the English department.

6. Not until the junior year will all students be required to take a systematic course in English Communication. This course will naturally be taught on the level appropriate for third-year college students. The first term will be a basic course in oral and written composition: the selection of subjects and materials to present for a specific purpose, organization for definite readers or listeners, and practice in actual speaking and writing. The majority of students will continue this work in the second term; but some may be offered the option for the second term of a course in writing fiction, in public discussion, or in some similar communication activity.

It is hoped that on the basis of the earlier remedial work, the preceptorial discipline in expression related to the content of core courses, the increased knowledge and maturity of the students, and the demand for English skills in all their college work, juniors will be ready to profit from a course in English of advanced college grade.

7. These are the minimum common requirements in English. But the responsibility of the English department to the college as a whole does not stop at this point, nor even after a more exacting discipline in literature, requiring roughly one-fourth of the student's time, has been set up for those concentrating in English. The English staff at Colgate University believes that its obligation to the general student is at least as great as its obligation to the English major; that only the most advanced courses need be planned exclusively for English majors; and that on each level from the freshman to the senior year elective courses in English, American and world literature, energetically taught with a lack of pedantry, should tempt the general student to further exploration.

Strang Lawson,
Colgate University.

John P. Emery, Temple University, has just published "Arthur Murphy: An Eminent English Dramatist of the Eighteenth Century." Univ. of Penna. Press.

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NEITHER FISH, NOR FLESH

(Continued from page 1)

our inherited culture, are challenged, are threatened. It is not difficult to prove that the present world crisis has come about because civilized man has let his power over things outrun his control of his own reason. But that obvious truth by itself will never stop our decline toward barbarism. We who believe in the heart and the mind and the soul (to use the old terms) quite as firmly as and far more hopefully than in airplanes, bombs, and television, must take the offensive again, as did Augustine in the wreck of worldly power and progress in the fifth century.

An article is soon to appear in The Saturday Review of Literature by the distinguished scholar, Paul Schrecker. In it he describes how difficult it is for one nation really to understand another, until knowledge of both the resemblances and the differences has passed into the imagination. Only then can there be understanding because only then can one national feel what another national feels when he speaks of acts. And he quotes a famous French statement to the effect that no idea is really French until it has been embodied in French literature.

But precisely this, so it seems, is the prime objective if we are to teach our native literatures aggressively in the hoped-for and essential renaissance of the humanities. And to this objective all others must be contributory. If we have become technologically minded; if we have become ethically confused; if an intoxicating power over nature has taken the wheel and is driving the airplane of civilization towards disaster while we passengers boast of the speed; why then no reasoning as such, no ethical system as such, no pointings of history, are likely to be strong enough to reach the public mind. Unless that public mind is once again warmed by the imagination. Which usually means by literature — literature of the past as well as of the present, since we are speaking of what lifts and clears and guides and warms the mind until it can be reached by convincing argument and sober fact.

And for us Americans, this means particularly, literature in English. Except for the few great translations which may be called English literature, such as the English Bible, the language itself is here of vital importance. Words and rhythms are the solvents of the imagination and for full effect they must be ours. The best of Milton for us is incomparably more important than the best of Homer in translation (not that Homer should be excluded). An American youth can absorb more of the essential for the need here described from Shakespeare or Whitman or Thoreau than any foreigner except the most gifted poet or profound scholar, even though the ideas and the philosophy slip over the adolescent head. The word in literature carries with it emotions and associations far beyond its plain meaning. But for full effect it has to be our word.

It is not a question of ways and means here, but of ultimate objective. In the curriculum of colleges and universities we must be teaching the language of ideas, of life, of imagination, in every way we can devise. Literature, from this point of view, is the key to all the humanities, as well as a humanity itself, and makes them viable for both the emotions and the imagination. The key also to more than the humanities. It was not the theology, or the ethics of the Renaissance, or the craving of masses recently emancipated from the disciplines of the Middle Ages, which transformed England for good and for ill, and which gave ethical, and in some degree political and economic direction to the great American experiment. These lay behind, but the prime cause was a book but recently made familiar, and widely read from high to low. It was the English Bible. And the English Bible shaped the mass imagination because it was literature—not only Hebrew literature, but literature in great English. "The Word was God," but it was also our Word which spoke to the roots of our being.

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